

**Hopkins Center  
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presents

The Metropolitan Opera



**Fire Shut Up in My Bones**

Terence Blanchard

**Saturday, October 23, 1 pm**

Spaulding Auditorium • 2021

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# Fire Shut Up in My Bones

Terence Blanchard

*Duration: 3 hours, 10 minutes*

(Cast in order of vocal appearance)

Charles.....Will Liverman  
Destiny/Loneliness/Greta ..... Angel Blue  
Billie..... Latonia Moore  
Char'es-Baby ..... Walter Russell III

Conductor .....Yannick Nézet-Séguin  
Co-Directors..... James Robinson and Camille A. Brown  
Set Designer .....Allen Moyer  
Costume Designer .....Paul Tazewell  
Lighting Designer ..... Christopher Akerlind  
Projection Designer ..... Greg Emetaz  
Choreographer..... Camille A. Brown  
Live in HD Director ..... Gary Halvorson  
Live in HD Host.....Audra McDonald

Content Advisory: *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* addresses adult themes and contains some adult language.

# Synopsis

## Act I

Charles Blow, age 20, drives down a Louisiana backroad with a gun in the passenger seat. Destiny sings to him, calling him back to his childhood home. He begins reliving memories from his childhood.

Charles's seven-year-old self, Char'es-Baby, talks to his mother, Billie. He is desperate for affection, but Billie is too frazzled to give him the validation that he craves. They are dirt poor. Billie works in a chicken factory, but she dreams of Char'es-Baby getting a good education and escaping their town. Her husband, Spinner, is a womanizing spendthrift. When she hears that he's flirting with other women, she confronts him at gunpoint. Billie doesn't shoot, but she tosses Spinner out. Billie and her five sons move in with Uncle Paul. Char'es-Baby dreams of a different life, collecting "treasure" from the junkyard while Loneliness sings to him. One day, his cousin Chester comes to visit. When Chester sexually abuses him, he is too horrified and ashamed to say anything.

Adult Charles begins to weep as he recoils from these memories, while Destiny reminds him that there is no escape.

## Intermission (25 Minutes)

## Act II

As Charles grows into a teenager, he is full of confusion and rage, and tormented by phantom terrors. He attends a church service in which the pastor is baptizing people, promising that God can wipe all sins clean. Charles decides to get baptized, but it fails to free him of his inner demons. Charles tries to talk to his brothers, but they refuse to engage in any "soft talk." Loneliness reappears, promising to be his lifelong companion. Evelyn, a beautiful young girl, interrupts Charles's reverie. Their chemistry is clear. Charles feels a new sense of independence and is finally ready to strike out on his own; Grambling State University has offered him a full scholarship. Billie is left alone to reflect on all that she has sacrificed for her family and wonders what might lie ahead.

# Synopsis *continued*

## Act III

Charles is one of several fraternity pledges being hazed at his college. Charles stoically takes each indignity in stride: Pain is nothing new for him. Later, he goes to a frat party and meets an attractive young woman, Greta. They begin a passionate love affair. Charles eventually shares his awful secret with Greta, only to find out that she's still seeing someone else. Charles is left alone again. He calls home, desperate to hear his mother's voice. To his shock, Billie tells him that Chester has come back to visit. Charles instantly decides to return home to confront Chester, gun in hand.

Charles sits in his car on the dark road, contemplating the choice lying before him. Destiny starts to sing to him once again, seductively promising to stand by him through to the bloody end. As Charles reaches his childhood home, Charles-Baby appears, urging him to leave his bitterness behind. Charles must decide whether to exact his revenge or begin his life anew.

**If you or someone you know needs support in relation to sexual abuse, contact the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network at [rainn.org](http://rainn.org) or 800.656.4673.**

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